594 If the young man has noticed a girl or has already come to an understanding with her, he goes to her parents, introduces himself first to the father, who usually shows his most amiable side and recommends the young man to his daughter. Even though the lover did not obtain the girl's agreement beforehand -- something which can be accomplished with a few words in a brief encounter -- he will nonetheless find little opposition. The relations with the "father-in-law" and above all with the "mother-in-law" are as cordial and tender as can be. The young man brings his "mother-in-law" a little present, European salt or other things that women [431] love, and he also endears himself to the father through little attentions or presents, while the parents or the girl herself entertain the guest to the best of their ability. A natural tact causes the Pangwe to avoid mentioning anything that touches upon his relations to the girl in his contact with her family. Indeed, his delicacy with respect to the "parents-in-law" grows into a false sense of shame:

[539] wə́-oson a vū mabā'de
(The) feeling -- shame, it dies (from) frambesia

menkī'.
(of the) parents-in-law (relatives by marriage).

The sense of shame has caused a person to die from frambesia transmitted by the parents-in-law, that is, a suitor was afraid, from a sense of shame, to turn down the food offered him by the girl's father who was suffering from frambesia. He ate with the man from one bowl, caught the disease, and died.

To the girl herself the lover usually brings half a piece of 584 material -- valued at one mark -- (among the Jaunde he brings 834 a whole piece). In his courtship, the lover does not usually arrive at the desired goal right away, for it is customary for the girl, even if she grants the young man her affection and /256/ sleeps in the same bed with him, to refuse sexual intercourse with him during the first night. (See the tale on p. 132).

The reason for this custom lies in oson, the feeling of shame toward the talk of other people. The two parties know each other perfectly well as regards their lechery, but they pretend to be quite

in 1954 in connection with a study of family budgets.

amount of food necessary to maintain the population: a crop census was taken in 1948 in one of the Sangmélima cantons (2). In order to

2. Report of the administrative officer, J. M. Soupault. An average individual's requirement would be: 250 maize plants, 330 manioc plants, 130 plantains, 110 macabo, 7 kilograms of rice, and 32 kilograms of groundnuts.

satisfy the needs of 6, 249 inhabitants there is no "exportation" to speak of. The canton used to produce 1, 635, 000 maize plants, 2, 049, 000 manioc, 824, 190 plantain bananas, 687, 800 macabo. It furthermore provided 44 tons of rice, 200 tons of groundnuts. There were 85, 180 fruit trees producing various kinds of fruit (Pachylobes /Canarium edula Hooker, known as asa in Pahouin country—Ed./, Estulia, oranges, etc.)

Clearing land by burning and the absence of organic fertilizer probably explain the exhaustion of the soil and the shifting cultivation that results from it.

The breeding and rearing of small animals is nevertheless understood and practiced: goats, dogs, fowls, pigs were and still are plentiful in the villages. These animals do not seem to contribute much to the food supply nor to the economic life. The very limited practice of selling pieces of pork has dates from recent years. As a matter of fact, animals were useful for giving quasi-ritual presents, for paying bride prices, and for celebrating family occasions: at a marriage, burial, and the end of mourning, two or three goats were killed to provide food for the relatives.

Of course, these animals are not stabled or fed; the herds wander along the outskirts of villages and do not fail to plunder the gardens. There are innumerable classic quarrels between farmers and herders (with the slight difference here that no one is exclusively a herder nor exclusively a farmer). Was the practice of enclosing by hedges established so as to avoid such depredations, or to give military protection to the settlements? Whatever the origin, this practice associated with the raising of animals would have made it possible to avoid

6: Alexandre and Binet--41 G-5 (1946-1954) 1958 FH9 Fang FH9

3. Trade

Planters command few sources of income; beside their tool equipment a thousand new needs have arisen, which trade must satisfy.

There is, oddly, no commercial tradition at all among the Pahouin. For bride-price payments previous generations used ivory tusks or pieces of wrought iron in the shape of arrows. But was this a form of money? Nothing was bought, nothing sold. And yet, according to Balandier, the pursuit of wealth represented the men's principal activity (2) aside from routine work, perhaps, moreover, because

> 2. Cf. Largeau (no. 48) for the mythical role of the spider in producing merchandise "among the dead." (P. A.)

there was no trade or exchange. From the accounts, it appears that previous generations could only obtain goods from distant countries by bilaba and not by purchase. The bilaba approximates the potlatch in being a contest. During a visit a host gives his guest all kinds of presents, defying him to do the like. Later the guest will have to offer even more than he received. Thus, exchange and a struggle for prestige are involved at the same time (3). Bilaba apparently were

> 3. J. Guilbot, Journal de la Société des Africanistes, 1951, Vol. 21; G. Balandier, Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique noire /Contemporary Native African Sociology/, P.U.F. /Presses Universitaires de France/, 1955, p. 182.

means of distributing objects of European origin (salt, weapons, clothes) and of exchanging them for ivory collected in the interior, game, or the dogs that some tribes /34/ eat. In general, it is to such exchanges as these that the old accounts refer. But one can scarcely speak of trade for such ritualized gifts and countergift. And nothing else warrants the assumption of an economy based on exchange. Between Yaoundé and Brazzaville there are no markets, or, more correctly, the markets that now exist were started by Europeans or at their instigation (1).

6: Alexandre and Binet--42 G-5 (1946-1954) 1958 FH9 Fang FH9

1. This lack is also pointed out by Balandier, op. cit., p. 544.

A careful study of village names in several subdivisions has not turned up a name that seems connected with ideas of market, exchange, or trade. Moreover, vocabularies for such subjects are very limited.

And, into this land so unprepared for an economic /sic/ life, world economy is penetrating with all its complexity, setting a purchase price for the total output, which has fluctuations the planters obviously cannot understand. Their dismay is natural, since they have not even been able to become familiar with ideas about price, demand, or bargaining through traditions of trade.

It goes without saying that the time when salt was the item most in demand is long since past. However, bags of salt appear among traditional wedding presents, and the manufacture of salt from lye-washed palm ash is still known, though the product is only sold—and moreover very rarely—for its medicinal properties.

Expenditures have become extremely diversified, as shown by the analysis of an average family budget: (2)

2. These figures drawn from Budgets familiaux au Cameroun /Family Budgets in the Cameroons/, p. 150, do not take into account, we must remember, auto consumption.

Food	14 percent	Household articles	1.9 percent
Textiles	17.4 -	Equipment	7.7 -
Bride price	13 -	Taxes	8.5 -
Housing and furniture	7.5 -	Medicaments	1.3 -
Bedding	1.5 -	Education	0.9 -
Lighting and upkeep	3 -	Gifts and miscellaneous	6 -
Trips	2 -		

Food now includes, even in the bush, imported items like stockfish or like the bread, sardines, sugar, and condensed milk that are used less regularly. Clothes are the main item of expense. The desire to follow Paris fashions is perhaps not a national trait peculiar

F
P
563 Bekôé, are now assimilated and are considered a special Pahouin ayôn
565 (see above, p. 54). But the nomadic groups themselves are beginning to give up the obligatory intermediation of the Pahouin in order to sell their game; they are to be seen at markets and even in government offices and in the courts.

F 609 Foreigners, bone bikul (êkul = foreign tribe), had no rights except as guests or hosts, beyeñ (sing. nneñ), which means that they had in fact to buy security. Since European conquest there has been an increase in the betabe (from tabe = to stay, to dwell), privileged strangers admitted to residence by the head of a family or village, often allied by marriage to the clan amid which they have settled. Their children can be absorbed but are not true bo'beti, at least not F in the first generations.

56 Thus truly Pahouin society was and remains very much a closed one, since entrance into it is, in practice, only by blood. On the other hand, it is very little stratified internally, outside of age grades; it might even be said to be averse to hierarchies.

F 564 At first one is rather tempted to conclude that there are no castes. This statement is perhaps too sweeping, if we take into consideration the fact that certain endogamous clans like the Ndôñ are perhaps castes or represent former castes. The subject deserves further study. /60/

F 556 565 Does Pahouin society admit of social classes based on birth or wealth? In spite of the egalitarian and anarchic temperament of the Pahouin, I think this is so. Terminology proves it by distinguishing the bo' beti not only from the captives but even from the zeñ bôt, the humble people: mo'nti is often translated today as "Monsieur." Within the last two generations there has grown up before our eyes a real bourgeoisie of large-scale planters, clerks (bekilak), artisans, and skilled workmen, which is inclined to stand out against a lower class of small peasants, laborers, and even, at the moment, of a "proletariat in sunglasses" — petty tradesmen, etc. —a local equivalent of our white-collar workers. Already in traditional society the minkukum, the rich, were to be distinguished from the common people, the zeñ bôt.

557 565 43 437 The rich were looked at askance and were objects of suspicion to the general public, always quick to attribute material success to the possession of an êvu (êvur, êvus), to malevolent sorcery. The

nkukum had to excuse his wealth, primarily by distributing it through customary hospitality and also by a special device of economic-social control resembling the potlatch, the bilaba.

This practice seems to have been especially common among the Boulou. Bertaut relates the word to a Ngumba root meaning "to talk," "to cajole." I should rather incline toward a derivative of the verb lap, "to draw water," by extension "to splash," which can figuratively also convey the idea of scoffing. It is not impossible that the bilaba mechanism was connected with that of the joking relationship, awusə. The bilaba begins with a challenge from one nkukum to another, each man claiming to be the richer. The challenger goes to the house of the challenged, carrying a load of merchandise, mebo me dulu, "legs for the journey," and accompanied by a large retinue of musicians and singers, etc. When he reaches the home of the other njem bilaba (bilaba dancer), he overwhelms him with presents and taunts; his opposite number replies, present for present and jeer for jeer, until he has contributed more than the equivalent of the mebo me dulu. The first njem bilaba goes home and waits for the other's return visit with his own mebo me dulu. Visits and countervisits may go on for a long time, each of the bejem bilaba calling on his immediate family for help, then upon his lineage or clan, for continued supplies. The bilaba therefore comes to be a collective affair. It must be observed that not just any kind of merchandise is exchanged: a njem bilaba in the east (nku, ɔku) provides local products, (livestock, cacao, ivory, etc.), in the west (nkɛ́) imported products (loincloths, salt, powder, etc.) (1). It should be remembered /61/ in this

1. M. Zoll'Owambe (no. 125) speaks of akum so, "merchandise of the north," imports, and of akum nak, "merchandise of the south," products of the country. But there appears to have been some confusion. In fact, so • coast, downstream, is related to nkɛ́ • west, which also means downstream, while nak • hinterland, upstream (nku • east, related to kui • to come from, rise from, emerge); cf. Largeau, who considers the north to be on the right (male) and the south on the left (female). Imported products would be considered male.

connection that the points of the compass have a sexual implication, which is not well understood. The bilaba sets up a sort of joking relationship between the families of the participants, which may continue after their death.

The institution seems to be dying out, though it was still flourishing between the two /World?/ wars and often involved considerable amounts of money (1).

> 1. Balandier (no. 175 and in a personal communication) stresses the economic importance of the bilaba which, in a society without a money or trade economy, constituted one of the principal means of circulating goods and, especially, of diffusing imported commodities.

In spite of the fear his success inspires, and perhaps because of this fear, the rich man enjoyed undoubted authority in his village and sometimes beyond it. Nkukuma, the absolute form of nkukum, is used to translate "chief" (it probably means, more precisely, "person of note").

The word évet, also applied to subchiefs or government "capitas" is likewise used —a correct nuance if, as Bates says, évet is a corruption of headman applied originally to the chiefs of trade caravans. These men were chosen for their business astuteness, diplomacy, authority, and courage, but they were only deputies of a clan or village, not true political chiefs. To convey the latter implication the preferable term is still nɔ̂ɔ̂ bɔ̂t (Fang, nnɔ̂ mur) from ɔ̂ = to say, to command, a term indicating a de facto state, /état de fait/ rather than a legal notion. It should be recalled that there were no political leaders other than the seniors, mintɔ̂l, of the extended families. Their authority was further limited by the ease with which their brothers could leave the village to establish another nearby (2).

> 2. But among some Pahouinized peoples the existence of royal insignia shows that chiefship /chefferie/ is an institution: among the Ewondo and Yaunde the head of the clan designated his successor or, if he

yet takes the risk of a breach of faith on the ñyale's part. The latter is supposed to return the flock intact, but as long as he tends it, he may do what he wants with it, putting it to use like a kind of credit. It is as well to point out that this kind of contract, which at present is falling into disuse, gave occasion to endless litigation.

The trade contract under its old name abom or the newer atiñ kilak or atiñ akus kaka is, on the other hand, becoming more and more widespread. A trader, nkuan biôm or mbi fatyélé, advances to a kilak (from "clerk") cash and goods on the kilak's undertaking to provide the equivalent in a certain tonnage of cacao. The contract is set forth in a written "good for...," which represents recognition of the debt. The kilak exerts himself to collect the promised tonnage, usually by buying from planters of his clan, sometimes by subcontract with "small clerks," bone bekilak. The contract has a due date, with the usual contingencies; in the case of rising prices, the kilak may run into difficulties and not be able to furnish the promised tonnage unless planters of his family give him credit or sell to him below the price. Cacao buying is also done by commission, the agent, nlôman, (envoy), receiving a cash advance with which to buy as much cacao as possible. Both methods give rise to litigation, which is all the more common because the moneylender is usually a European or an African of another tribe, a "Gabonese" in French Equatorial Africa, a Bamiléké, mone galifis (from Coast English "Grassfield") in the Cameroons.

In general a commission is always possible, whether in making a contract or in pleading in court. The person giving the commission is called mve ngul, giver of power; the agent is called mbili ngul, possessing power. They are jointly and severally responsible.

The bilaba contract, described about (41, 77), is disappearing. There survives, however, a sort of poor man's bilaba, the meyeñ, from meñ, guest, which allows a zesé môt, a humble man, to levy a kind of tax on the rich, minkukum, of his clan by the simple procedure of going to visit them, carrying a present /81/ which must be returned by generous hospitality and by a countergift of higher value. This is a quasi contract, sanctioned by public opinion, which is a heavy burden on people thought to be rich; it underlies the family parasitism prevalent in large towns. The reputed nkukum who tries to escape would be accused of being hard hearted, nlem ayet, which could easily lead to a charge of sorcery.

784 Some bityi appear to be connected with totemism: these are the bityi mekam, protective prohibitions, forbidding members of certain clans to kill certain animals or to eat certain plants. Others are undoubtedly connected with the social structure, like sex or age-grade prohibitions, the breaking of which strike at the family hierarchy. Others may be described as hygienic prohibitions, like those connected with pregnancy, illness, or convalescence. There are prohibitions connected with magic: personal taboos vis-à-vis some animal seen in a dream after a family initiation, or imposed when joining an association; prohibitions pronounced by a magician, often out of revenge; prohibitions undertaken as vows to obtain a specific result. Among the Beti, Binet has known women to impose on themselves certain food etyi for a year, at the end of which time there is a party where they collect many presents from their relatives and friends. This seems to be an innovation and perhaps represents a deviation from certain Catholic practices.

It seems that in former times, following a war or an alliance, or in connection with an awusô relationship, two clans might undertake to respect one another's clan taboo. Besides, married women, although they did not enter the husband's clan, were supposed to some extent to respect its bityi.

783 Minsem can be expiated by redemption, ngôô, according to
784 different rites (étyi, melan among men, évoôô among women), including public confession and sacrifice (for women, the sacrifice is made by father or husband, the woman undergoing severe corporal punishment). /123/

Some personal bityi can be raised (kui étyi = to emerge from a taboo) by a process similar to that of redemption for a nsem. This is never possible in cases of general sexual, age-grade, or clan prohibitions.

787 The first Christian converts must have shown genuine heroism in
784 giving up their bityi, since they had to overcome, not only personal fear, sometimes at the cost of real psycho-physiological crises, but also unanimous public obloquy and often the vengeance of their family, which attributed to their minsem all its misfortunes. One might say that only that first generation of Christians succeeded in abandoning the bityi almost completely. The following generations, in much greater numbers, continued to observe quite a few /bityi/, certainly all those that did not openly conflict with the practice of the /new/

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The practitioner operates quickly, assisted by the chief of the tribe. Before operating on each child, he hands the knife [525] to the chief, without a word, and the latter accepts it, also in silence, without saying the usual "thank you" or "very good," abora or mvê.

With girls none of these ceremonies are observed. An experienced matron performs the operation, usually when the child is very young. It is nevertheless a religious act, accompanied by songs and dances, but since only women are present, it was impossible for me to learn the slightest detail.

The tribal chief immediately returns the knife to the practitioner, saying, "Take it and do what has to be done." (Nôde n'ébo dzam ma yia n'ébo, lit., "Take it so as to do the deed which 'I' ought to do.") This proves that the practitioner is but the chief's delegate. Usually it is the latter who holds the penis firmly. First of all, the father pulls out the foreskin as far as possible and ties it with a bit of string. The penis, thus prepared, is then stretched out on a special board, and the practitioner cuts quickly. This is the most painful part of the operation. Ashes are then rubbed on the open wound. The head [778] of the family carefully collects the blood, which will constitute a powerful fetish after it has been offered in sacrifice to the mvamayôn and to the ancestors.

It is a point of honor for the children not to cry out, no matter what the pain. Besides, the pain must be very much lessened by the fact that the chief squeezes the flesh firmly and the operator works quickly. As soon as it is over, the child is taken to be bathed and is then laid on a bed of ashes. His scanty clothing is removed, if that has not already been done during the preceding days, and he is now dressed in a loose garment or a belt from which hangs a thick pad of raffia fiber or thin strips of finely cut banana tree bark, so as to protect him from being hurt. After the operation every father offers [431] the practitioner a present, often a sheep or at least several hens. [782 778] The latter then, according to the customary rites, offers one of the sheep to the spirits and has part of it burnt. The ashes of the sacrifice, mixed with the collected blood, will constitute the child's fetish. Anything left over is carefully buried in a place